

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 26/45

Revised 10-14-05

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic IBM Building

other 50 Monroe

2. Location

street and number 50 Monroe Place not for publication

city, town Rockville vicinity

county Montgomery

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Alexander Guss et al., C/O Ronald Cohen, C/O Ronald Cohen Mgmt

street and number 2701 Tower Oaks Blvd. #200

telephone

city, town Rockville

state MD

zip code 20852

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Judicial Center liber 29975 folio 776

city, town Rockville tax map GR32 tax parcel P401 tax ID number 00144444

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
☒ Other: Peerless Rockville, Peerless Places

6. Classification

Category

☐ district
☒ building(s)
☐ structure
☐ site
☐ object

Ownership

☐ public
☒ private
☐ both

Current Function

☐ agriculture ☐ landscape
☒ commerce/trade ☐ recreation/culture
☐ defense ☐ religion
☐ domestic ☐ social
☐ education ☐ transportation
☐ funerary ☐ work in progress
☐ government ☐ unknown
☐ health care ☒ vacant/not in use
☐ industry ☐ other:

Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total

Number of Contributing Resources
previously listed in the Inventory

7. Description

Inventory No. *M:26-45*

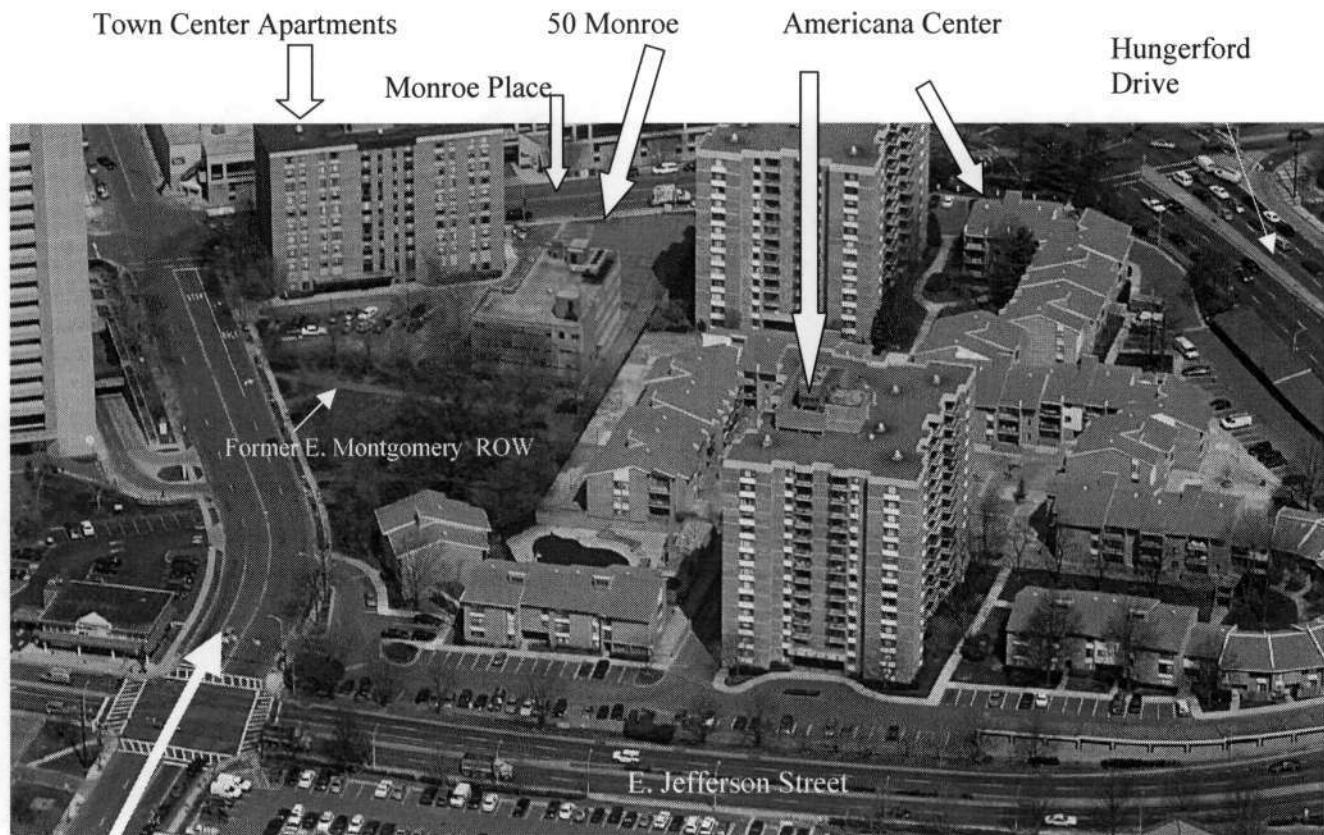
Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Summary:

50 Monroe is a four-story office building constructed in 1958-59 by Otho Barkley, a Bethesda builder. One of Rockville's first and most distinctive modernist buildings, it was designed by Bethesda architect Stanley H. Arthur and incorporates key characteristics and design elements of Bauhaus-style commercial architecture. It is popularly called the "IBM Building" after its first and best-known tenant. Although the environmental setting and orientation have changed dramatically since 1959, the building itself is substantially unaltered and is the last vestige of Rockville's historic main street, East Montgomery Avenue, as it developed from the 1820s through the 1960s.



Monroe
Street

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

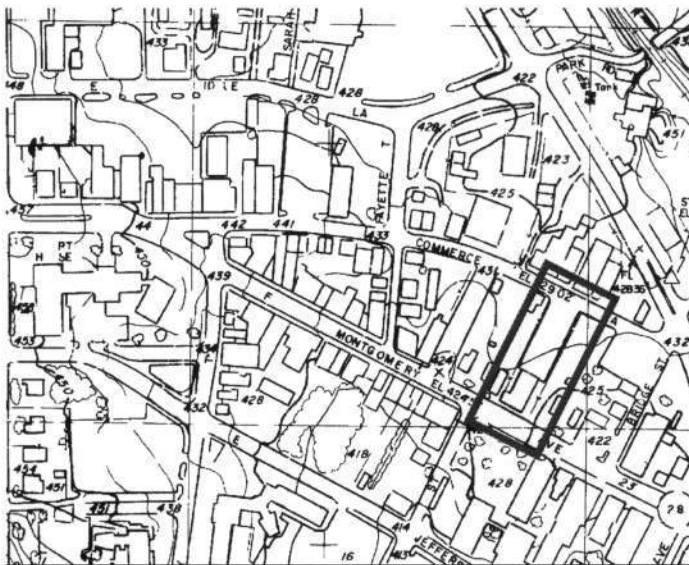
Name 50 Monroe Place

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Inventory No. M:26-45

Significance statement:



Rockville before Urban Renewal 1961

When 50 Monroe Place was completed in 1959, (See map to the left and photo below) its address was 326 East Montgomery Avenue and it was situated on a principal thoroughfare through Rockville's central business district. The rear (north) entrance, including a parking lot, was bounded by Commerce Lane. Photographs of the period indicate an additional parking lot on the eastern portion of the site, sidewalks and parking meters to the south, open space to the west, and traffic moving along East Montgomery Avenue to the south. Yellow window panels presented a lively façade to the main street.(1) According to 1959 news articles, the building had 28,000 square feet of office space, making it the largest private office building in Rockville. It also featured a basement, a 1500-pound Otis elevator, and separate entrances on East Montgomery Avenue and Commerce Lane.(2) The building is constructed of reinforced concrete and is covered by brick masonry

and curtain walls. It was constructed at a cost of \$500,000.(3)

Description:

Stanley Arthur's design appears to have been inspired by the Bauhaus movement, whose principal facility at Dessau, Germany (1925-1926) it evokes in massing, rectilinear style, and architectural elements.



Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, Architect (1926)



326 E. Montgomery Avenue, Stanley Arthur, Architect. (1963) City of Rockville photo.

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The first story is comprised of a full rectangular block, with 2nd, 3rd, and 4th stories in an L-shaped or "set back" configuration, forming an inner court on the northwest corner. Large sections of window walls with yellow porcelain panels cover portions of the west, east, and south facades.

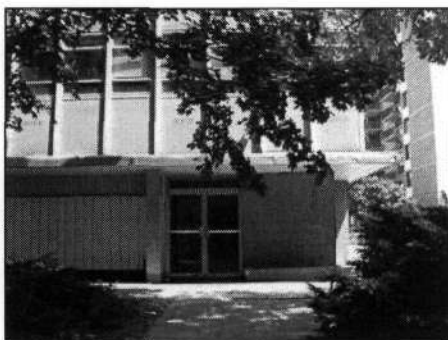


South (front) facade 2004- Peerless Rockville photo



North (rear) facade 2004 – Peerless Rockville photo

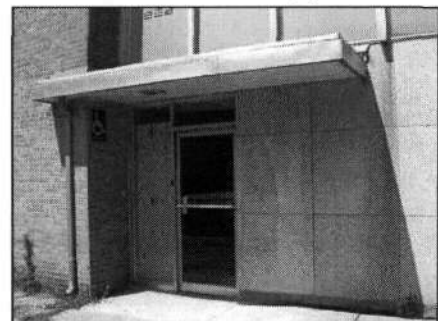
The rear (north) facade is constructed of brick, laid in common bond, and illuminated by pairs of 3-part windows, corresponding to each floor, with fixed center panes and projected window panels surrounded by steel/aluminum frames. Alternating with this window placement are smaller 2-part windows that illuminate an interior stairwell above the rear entrance. The brick section of the ell wall overlooking the inner court has pairs of 3-part windows that correspond to the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors. Large brick sections alternate with three-story window walls that are supported by concrete panels running across the length of the first story.



South (front) entrance- City of Rockville photo 2005

The principal façade features a deep portico along the main entrance to the south, leading into a reception area and first-floor offices. (4) Secondary entrances on the north and east facades are sheltered by flat brushed steel/aluminum canopies measuring approximately 5 to 6 feet long by 1 foot wide. The roof, supported by steel trusses, is flat; brick panels rise approximately 1 foot above the window wall sections and an elevator tower with projected windows punctuates the roofline

profile. A square section of brick wall rises approximately 5 feet above the mid-section of the rear elevation marking the interior stair tower and entryway. A thin band of white concrete runs atop the length of the building's brick sections.



East entrance- City of Rockville photo 2005

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The window walls are the building's most distinctive architectural motif. They consist of alternating bands of yellow porcelain enamel panels and 3-part windows encased in a aluminum grid. The yellow panels decrease in width from the 4th to the 2nd stories; the window units are of uniform size. The window wall on the east façade has 16 horizontal panels, and the west façade has 14. The south façade has 16, with an additional 2 panels wrapped around the southeast corner above the principal entryway. This ingenious equation combines balance and asymmetry, visual interest and architectural commensurability - hallmarks of Bauhaus design.



Interior staircase - Stanley Arthur's portfolio
(undated photo)

A photograph from Stanley Arthur's portfolio (left) shows the details of an interior stairway: terrazzo flooring, steel railings, mahogany paneling, a built-in floor planter, and smoothly finished walls and surfaces. A 1959 *Sentinel* news article reported that the building was equipped with air-conditioning and was designed with movable interior partitions to accommodate office suites of varying configurations. Two retail stores were initially planned for the first floor, but this presumably changed when IBM leased the property in 1959. (5)

The site has been drastically altered in the intervening decades, beginning with the realignment of street patterns during urban renewal of the 1960s and subsequent hi-rise construction on adjacent parcels throughout the 1970s. (6) As a result, the building lost its frontage on East Montgomery Avenue, and its address -along with the principal entrance - was changed to 50 Monroe Street. Following the demolition of Rockville Mall in 1993, the City took approximately 3800 square feet of the rear

parking lot when it created Monroe Place. (7) IBM occupied the building until the early 1970s, a few years after construction of its Gaithersburg facility. Following a succession of tenants, the building has been vacant since 1995.

Apart from a decade of neglect and deterioration, 50 Monroe appears to be substantially unaltered although its site has been severely compromised. According to legal records, the current lot size is 19,528 square feet. (8) The principal (south) façade overlooks the rear portion of James Monroe Park, leaving it hidden from public view and vulnerable to vandalism and crime. This façade is boarded up and defaced with graffiti. Due to adjacent hi-rise development, significant portions of the building are below grade and are separated from adjoining properties by cast iron fencing. Although obscured by the scale of more recent construction, 50 Monroe is the last vestige of Rockville's historic main street, East Montgomery Avenue, as it developed from the 1820s to the 1960s.

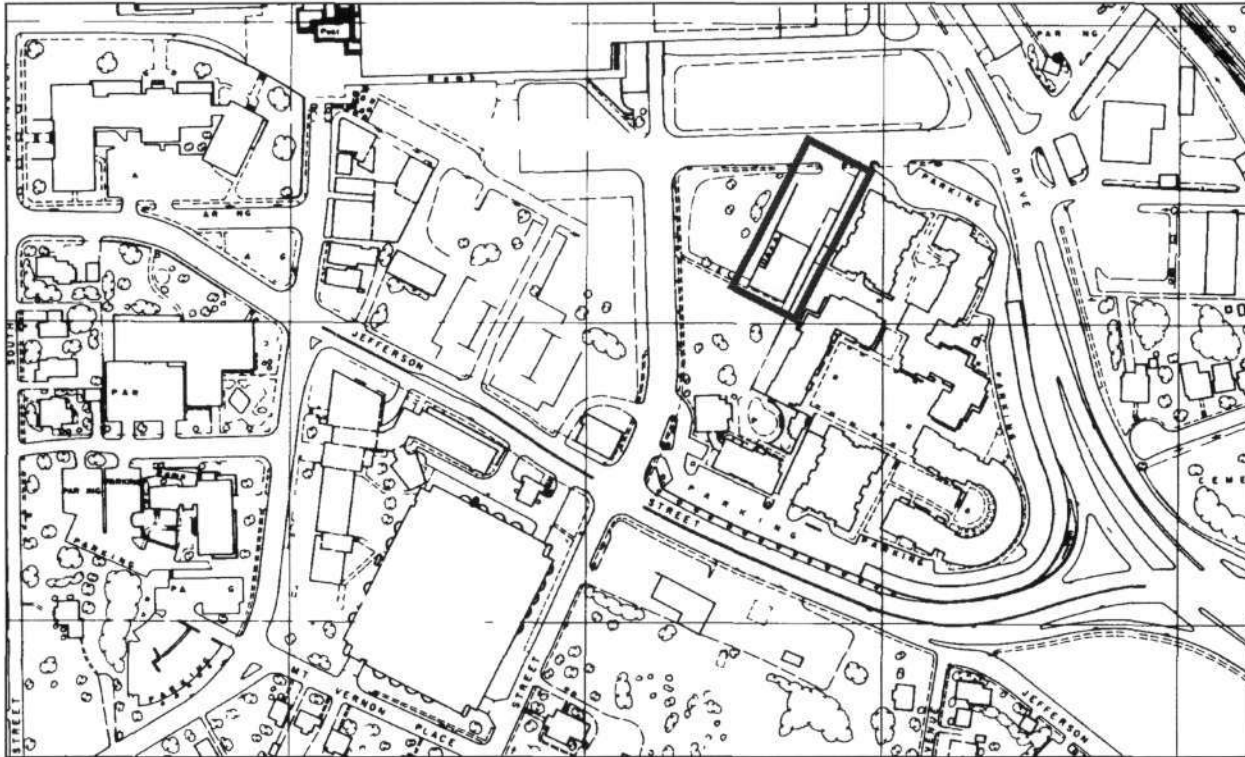
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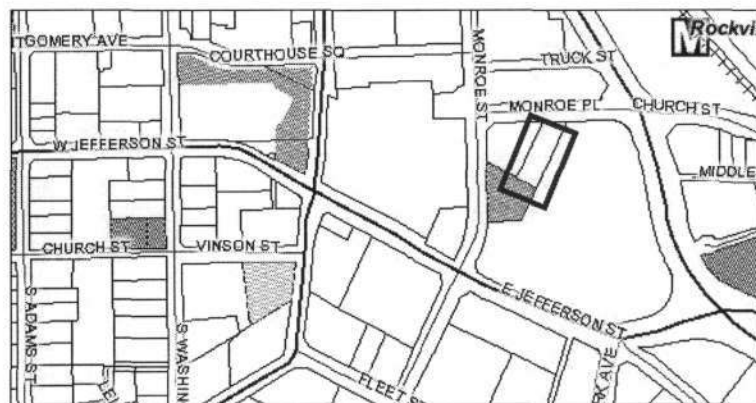
Name 50 Monroe Place

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Planimetric Map of Part of City of Rockville 1972: Allen & Koenig, Land Planners & Surveyors. This map shows the Courthouse area before the new Judicial Center was constructed.



2005 configuration of downtown Rockville. Monroe Street is now through to Middle Lane. The 1972 dogleg Monroe Street to Hungerford Drive has been renamed Monroe Place.

The IBM site is outlined in blue on both maps.

8. Significance

Inventory No. *M:26-45*

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Local history

Specific dates 1959 **Architect/Builder** Stanley H. Arthur/ Otho Barkley

Construction dates 1958- 59

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☐ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

Statement of Significance

50 Monroe Place, one of Rockville's first modernist office buildings, is an architecturally distinctive and historically significant property of the City's recent past. Designed by Stanley H. Arthur, a prolific and respected architect, 50 Monroe was completed in 1959, a banner year for commercial architecture in Rockville. It was widely recognized for its commercial significance and Bauhaus-inspired design. Named for its first tenant, the IBM Building signaled Rockville's emergence as a major center of post-war development, research, and technology. Dwarfed by more recent hi-rise construction, it remains an icon of Rockville's evolving architectural landscape.

History and Support



Front (south) façade – photo from Stanley Arthur's portfolio (undated)

Despite its deteriorated condition, 50 Monroe has considerable historical, cultural, and architectural significance for the City of Rockville, the seat of Montgomery County government. It characterized an era of critical transformation and development, it brought elite modernist architecture to Rockville's commercial landscape, and it connected Rockville to a prestigious network of scientific and research communities. Initially dubbed the Barkley Building after its builder, Otho Barkley, it soon became known as the IBM Building, a name that persists nearly five decades later. (9)

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Situated prominently on East Montgomery Avenue – Rockville’s historic main street – the IBM Building underscored the City’s rapid transformation from small town to a major center of development, commerce, and space-age research technology. It was, architecturally, the most sophisticated and daring of five new office buildings of 1959, a banner year for commercial architecture in Rockville that followed more than a decade of unprecedented population growth, the modernization of City government, and the development of a modern infrastructure and essential services. (10) This, combined with geographic proximity to the federal government in Washington, made Rockville an attractive place to live and work.

IBM’s decision to decentralize its operations from New York to Washington and locate its new Federal Systems Division in Rockville received widespread coverage in the local and regional press, and it was highlighted in a feature article on “Rockville’s Business Boom” in the Washington *Evening Star*. (11) Charles Benton, Jr., president of IBM’s Federal Systems Division, cited months of planning that preceded the company’s decision, which involved the relocation of more than 100 employees and their families. Benton noted that IBM chose Montgomery County and Rockville because “the living conditions, education and cultural facilities [are] the best anywhere.” (12) IBM leased the property until the early 1970s.

IBM’s Rockville division was one in an expanding network of electronic and defense operations systems throughout the Washington metropolitan area and beyond. Like the technologies IBM was developing, the new building on East Montgomery Avenue was sleek, modern, and state of the art. Its bold geometry, innovative use of vibrant color, and subtle mathematical harmonies celebrated modern industry, technology, and materials. (13) And like the Bauhaus movement that inspired its design, the IBM Building was a workshop for generating the concepts and technologies that were to shape and inform a new era of data management, specialized communications, and space-age defense. Comparatively small in scale by today’s standards, its architectural significance was underscored in the mid-1960s, when it was identified as one of only 10 conservation properties in Rockville’s Mid-City urban renewal project. (14)

Architect Stanley H. Arthur (1912-1999), was a native of Louisville, Kentucky and a 1937 graduate of the University of Illinois. He served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during World War II and practiced architecture in Louisville and Cleveland before coming to the Washington area in the late 1940s. (15) In 1951, Arthur established his own firm in Bethesda, Maryland, which by the mid-1960s, employed 3 architects and supporting staff, associates in Mechanical, Structural, and Civil Engineering, a landscape architect, and consultants in acoustics, lighting, interior design, art, and sculpture. (16)

A prolific and versatile architect, Arthur designed numerous buildings throughout the Washington area, principally in Montgomery County. His clients included commercial and office developers, non-profit organizations, churches, and government agencies, including the Montgomery County Board of Education, for whom he designed more than 60 educational facilities (Travilah Elementary School, 1960; Winston Churchill High School, 1966). (17) In addition to the Davis Memorial Library (1967), Arthur completed a number of noteworthy office buildings in Bethesda and Chevy Chase, some of which are still in use and relatively unaltered. These include the Vaughn Building (1956), Chevy Chase Medical Building (1959) and the Bethesda Medical Building (1955), an imposing 6-story office block on Wisconsin Avenue.

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Arthur's work was featured in The Washington Post, including a 1962 article praising his striking modernist design for Calvary Lutheran Church in Silver Spring. (18)

The Barkley/IBM Building introduced Arthur's work to Rockville, where he designed 6 major projects between 1959 and 1971. Shortly after the IBM Building opened in 1959, Mayor Alexander J. Greene and the City Council hired Arthur to design the Rockville Civic Auditorium, following a dispute with Washington architect Chloethiel Woodard Smith whose design proposal they had rejected as too costly and inappropriate for a suburban community. (19) Additional commissions in Rockville included the Rockville Unitarian Church (1964), Southlawn Middle School (1969) [today Maryvale Elementary School], Thomas S. Wootton High School (1970), and the Rockville Regional Library (1971).

An active professional, Arthur served on the Maryland Architectural Registration Board (1963-1977), and he was a founder and president of the Potomac Valley Chapter of Maryland American Institute of Architects (1960-1961). Following his retirement in 1978, Stanley Arthur exhibited and won prizes for his watercolor paintings, a pastime of his early career. (20) He died in 1999, leaving an impressive legacy of architectural achievement and professionalism.

Stanley Arthur was a master of the modernist idiom, which he subtly adapted to a variety of architectural uses and contexts. His school buildings, typically 1 or 2-stories, support bold horizontal rooflines and deep sheltering pavilions that define spatial relationships to site. Office buildings, composed of crisp geometric blocks, evoke the scale and character of their time. Calvary Lutheran Church, adjacent to the Beltway in Silver Spring, features a striking 78-foot chancel that forms a steep 25-degree angle, a combination that Arthur described as a "blend of the Gothic and the contemporary." (21) His 1971 design for the Rockville Regional Library (scheduled for demolition in 2006) is a skilful synthesis of International Style architecture and an ingenious site plan. Although we are just beginning to research and document Stanley Arthur's impressive body of work, he clearly contributed much to the history and diversity of Rockville's and Montgomery County's modern architectural character.

Notes

1. Vacant since the mid-1990s, the building is not accessible to the public or available for in-depth measurement, research, or documentation. This description is based on the Rockville's Recent Past survey of modern architecture (1914-1984) conducted by Peerless Rockville in 2004 and 2005. In addition to a 1963 Appraisal Report commissioned by the City of Rockville for the Mid-City Urban Renewal Project and recent windshield surveys of the property, this MHT form draws upon interviews, photographs, legal records, maps, news articles, and related sources. See: William H. Throckmorton, M.A.I., *Appraisal Report, Mid-City Urban Renewal Area, Rockville, Maryland, Commissioned by the City of Rockville, Maryland for Project No. Md. R-16, 326 East Montgomery Avenue*. October 15, 1963. [Peerless Rockville Collection]

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2. *Appraisal Report* (1993), p. 4; Steed Evans, "Construction Boom Under Way in City," [Montgomery County, MD] *Sentinel*, January 15, 1959, B:2; "New Office Buildings Pace City's Growth," [Montgomery County, MD] *Sentinel*, March 12, 1959, B:9; "Building May Be Ready By April 30," [Montgomery County, MD] *Sentinel*, March 26, 1959, B:2.
3. *Appraisal Report* (1963), p. 4; "Rockville Office Building Under Construction," *The Washington Post*, June 28, 1958, C:12; "New Office Buildings ..." *Sentinel*, March 12, 1959, B:9.
4. A news article notes that two "stores" were planned originally for the first floor. *Sentinel*, March 12, 1959, B:9.
5. Ibid.
6. Adjacent properties include: the Americana Centre, 1972; 51 Monroe Place, 1976; Town Center Apartments, 1978; the Executive Office Building and Judicial Center, 1981.
7. Ed Duffy, Community Development Program Manager, City of Rockville, Interview, November 3, 2004.
8. Records of the Maryland Department of Taxation and Assessments.
9. "Many Homes Built Along Busy Artery: Barkley Bros. Develop Residences Near Connecticut Avenue," *The Washington Post*, April 16, 1939, R:1; "O.C. Barkley Dies," *The Washington Post*, September 19, 1962, B:4.
10. In addition to new apartment buildings, housing projects, and a 100-unit motor hotel on North Washington Street, the *Sentinel* reported on the status of new office construction in or near Town Center. These projects included: the Barkley (later IBM) Building on East Montgomery Avenue; the Brown Building on East Jefferson; a "Colonial" building at 22 West Jefferson, the Abby Building at East Montgomery and Perry Street; and plans for an office building next to the Villa Theater on Commerce Lane. *Sentinel*, March 12, 1959, B:12.
11. Steed Evans, "Construction Boom Under Way in City," [Montgomery County, MD] *Sentinel*, January 15, 1959, B:2; "New Office Plan Bared," [Montgomery County, MD] *Sentinel*, January 22, 1959, A:1.
12. Charles L. Hoffman, "Rockville Enjoys Business Boom As Population Soars, Taxes Decline," *The [Washington] Evening Star*, November 9, 1959, A:1. See also: "IBM Cites Reasons for Coming Here," [Montgomery County, MD] *Sentinel*, March 17, 1960, A:7; "IBM Plans to Move Key Facility Here," [Montgomery County, MD] *Sentinel*, May 28, 1959, A:1; "First of IBM Aides Here," [Montgomery County, MD] *Sentinel*, September 24, 1959, A:3. An ad placed by IBM in the 1960-61 *Montgomery County Handbook* states the Montgomery County "furnishes an ideal place ... for

Maryland Historical Trust

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conducting our business and for providing our employees with a good place to live and raise their families." Montgomery County, Maryland Chamber of Commerce, *1960-61 Montgomery County Handbook*, p. 42. [Peerless Rockville Collection].

13. According to Leah Barnett, a former IBM employee in Rockville, Maryland, IBM adopted the use of bold primary colors in the 1960s for its architecture, textbooks, and corporate materials. Ms. Barnett notes that vibrant, saturated colors were an IBM 'hallmark.' Leah Barnett, Telephone interviews of October 2005.
14. In addition to the IBM Building, conservation properties included the Red Brick Courthouse (1891), the Grey Courthouse (1931), Farmer's Banking and Trust (1931), the Brown Building (1959), 30 Courthouse Square/Schlosser Building (1962), the Firehouse (1929), the Woolworth Building (1950's), the Kelly-Smith Building; and the Oxley Building. The last four were later razed. Eileen S. McGuckian, *Rockville: Portrait of a City* (Franklin, Tennessee: Hillsboro Press, 2001), p. 180.
15. *Stanley H. Arthur, Architect, A.I.A.* Undated professional portfolio. [Courtesy: Mary T. Arthur]; "Stanley Arthur Jr. Dies; Designed Area Buildings," *The Washington Post*, May 15, 1999, B:5; "Arthur, Stanley Houghton, A.I.A. 37," A.I.A. biographical entry [Courtesy: American Institute of Architects Archives].
16. Stanley Arthur, Undated portfolio.
17. "Bethesda's Busily Building Toward a Big Real Estate Future," *The Washington Post*, October 11, 1953, R:1; "Ocean Beach Housing Outlook," *The Washington Post*, September 5, 1954, R:2; "New Office Building for Bethesda," *The Washington Post*, July 17, 1955, G:1; "Bethesda Building Planned," *The Washington Post*, March 11, 1956, G:5; "New Maryland School," *The Washington Post*, March 16, 1957, B:2; "Chevy Chase Medical Building," *The Washington Post*, April 11, 1959, C:10; "New Home for Army Times," *The Washington Post*, July 24, 1955, G:18; "A Chancel Reaching Up to God," *The Washington Post*, April 21, 1962, D:1; "Ground-Breaking for Unitarian Church," *The Washington Post*, January 4, 1964, C:10.
18. "A Chancel Reaching Up to God," *The Washington Post*, April 21, 1962, D:1.
19. Alexander J. Greene, former Rockville Mayor, Interview of June 3, 2005.
20. "Arthur, Stanley Houghton," A.I.A. biographical entry; George M. Thompson, Assistant Chief, Building Technology Division, National Bureau of Standards. Letter of recommendation submitted on behalf of Stanley Arthur to the Maryland Board of Examiners and Registrars of Architects, April 7, 1949 [Peerless Rockville Collection].
21. "Chancel," *Post*, April 21, 1962.

9. Major Bibliographical References Inventory No.

M:26-45

City of Rockville Utility Service Records through 1984, Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation records, Montgomery County Plat records, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Rockville MD for 1949 and 1960, Montgomery County MD Sentinel and Washington Post and Washington Evening Star newspapers. City of Rockville Maps. Interview with Ed Duffy, Community Development Program Manager, City of Rockville. Interviews with former Rockville Mayor Alexander J. Greene, June 3, 2005, and Leah Barnett, October 2005. William M. Throckmorton, M.A.I., Appraisal Report, Mid-City Urban Renewal Area, Rockville, Maryland, Project No. Md.R-16, October 15, 1963. Photographs from City of Rockville and Stanley Arthur Professional Portfolio.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 19,528 square feet
Acreage of historical setting _____
Quadrangle name Rockville Quadrangle scale: _____

Verbal boundary description and justification

Tax Map GR32, P401, Montgomery Avenue, Rockville.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Teresa B. Lachin, Peerless Rockville		
organization	Peerless Rockville	date	October 12, 2005
street & number	29 Courthouse Sq. / P.O. Box 4262	telephone	301-762-0096
city or town	Rockville	state	MD

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

M: 26-45
IBM Building
50 Monroe Place
Rockville, MD
USGS Rockville Quad

